



Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative

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WLCI Update

Overview and Outlook

The mission of the WLCI is to conduct a long-term science-based program to assess and enhance the quality and quantity of aquatic and terrestrial habitats at a landscape scale in southwest Wyoming, based on community partnerships and facilitation of responsible development.

The Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI) took its first steps toward achieving conservation results in 2007 with the implementation of six on-the-ground projects in southwest Wyoming. These efforts will continue and will become more strategic in 2008. This inaugural issue of a newsletter for the WLCI describes the progress made to date and the vision for future work on this large-scale, multi-agency, science-based initiative.

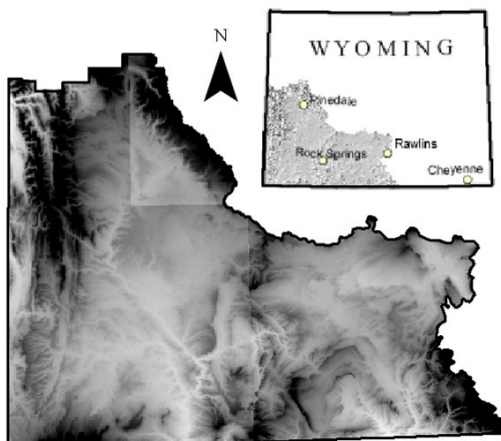
The WLCI is developing partnerships with various organizations and is promoting public involvement and ownership at the local level. To that end, the WLCI Executive Committee expanded in October 2007 to include representation from the southwest Wyoming county commissioners and conservation districts. These two groups joined the Support Subcommittee in January 2008 as well.

The WLCI Coordination Team (CT) currently is developing a strategic plan to guide the work of the initiative and bring various elements together. The CT is also working with participating agencies to ensure projects selected for this year are ready for implementation. The Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) is drafting a document that will help integrate science with the on-the-ground conservation actions in the WLCI area. In late March, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) will hold a workshop to help the CT, STAC and Support

Subcommittee determine how science can be used to identify specific priority conservation areas and issues for southwest Wyoming. This information will be used to plan and develop conservation actions for funding in 2009 and 2010.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) received initial federal funding of \$402,000 in 2007 for on-the-ground projects. Federal funding for fiscal year 2008 includes \$1.25 million

for the BLM to do on-the-ground project work, \$1.5 million for the USGS to provide scientific research and support, and \$1.5 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to protect at-risk species and fund work on private land. The WLCI plans to receive federal funds annually and will seek additional sources of funding.



Map showing the boundaries of the WLCI area.

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Ongoing WLCI efforts include scientific assessment of wildlife resources and anticipated development impacts in southwest Wyoming, implementation of strategic actions to conserve fish and wildlife, and monitoring conservation actions to provide information for future work. Future conservation activities may include improving habitats, acquiring conservation easements, or working with landowners to protect habitat while maintaining viable operations. Additionally, the WLCI encourages use of best management practices where development is

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2007 Projects

Trumpeter Swan Habitat Enhancement

FWS



Trumpeter swan project prior to flooding.

The Trumpeter Swan Habitat Enhancement Project creates wetland habitats on public and private lands near the Green River. This project provides needed habitat through the creation of 20 acres of wetland area. This habitat will benefit trumpeter swans and migratory shorebirds as well as provide sage-grouse brood-rearing habitat. The enhancement project achieves objectives of the Pacific Flyway Plan and the

Wyoming Game and Fish Department trumpeter swan expansion plan. Additional special status species benefit from the habitat enhancement, including the boreal toad, Columbia spotted frog, and various waterfowl.

Partners, participants, or contributors: Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Rim Fire Ranch owned by John and Shaun Andrikopoulos

Wyoming Front Aspen Treatment

The Wyoming Front Aspen Treatment Project mechanically removed conifer trees that were encroaching on aspen stands across 500 acres. A prescribed fire is planned to provide additional treatment. The project should provide enhanced aspen sucker regeneration and renewed productivity. Additional treatments are planned for up to 9000 acres over the next 10 years.

Healthy aspen communities are considered essential for wildlife and plant diversity in the Rocky Mountain region. Aspen stands are utilized yearlong as parturition, nuptial, natal, territorial, and winter habitats.

Partners, participants, or contributors: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, U.S. Forest Service

FWS



Area with conifers removed and ready for prescribed burn.

The WLCI area covers more than 15 million acres of public and private land in southwest Wyoming.

Ferris Mountain Leafy Spurge and Russian Knapweed Treatment

The Ferris Mountain Treatment Project enabled invasive weed treatments in the Ferris Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and nearby areas. The primary targets of treatment were leafy spurge and Russian knapweed. Herbicides were applied on both public and adjoining private lands in this extremely rugged area. The original target was to treat 500 acres but favorable weather, material costs,

and operator effort allowed for treatment of 645 acres.

This project benefited native vegetation, including a rare cushion plant community in the Ferris Mountain WSA. Retention of native vegetation also benefits crucial winter habitat for bighorn sheep, sage-grouse, and other native wildlife.

Partners, participants, or contributors: Carbon County and private landowners

BLM Rawlins



Horseback treatment of invasive weeds in the Ferris Mountain area.

Adobe Town Range Improvements

BLM Rawlins



Solar arrays used to expand water distribution, which increases the range of forage utilization.

BLM Rawlins



Wild horses in the Herd Management Area of the Adobe Town Wilderness Study Area.

The Adobe Town Range Improvements addressed wild horse and livestock distribution, rangeland health, and restrictions to wild horse movement outside the Herd Management Area (HMA). The project included a large solar array that pumps water to five tanks, four horse-friendly cattleguards that restrict cattle movement, and two miles of fence conversion. The project helps multiple grazers in the Adobe Town area meet the Wyo-

ming Standards for Healthy Rangelands. Expanding distribution of water sources improves the distribution of wildlife, livestock, and wild horses, allowing the vegetation in this HMA to recover.

Partners, participants, or contributors: Little Snake River Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, State of Wyoming Trust Fund, private landowners

Projects totaling \$402,000 were funded in 2007.

Red Canyon Prescribed Burn

BLM Kemmerer



Blacklining the Red Canyon Prescribed Burn.

The Red Canyon Prescribed Burn was designed to improve the age class and diversity of plant communities. Quality, quantity, and availability of forage in this transitional-migratory area should be enhanced.

Changes resulting from the fire should allow antelope and deer to remain in this area so that crucial winter areas will be available when needed. Other wildlife benefiting from this treatment are small mammals and a variety of birds, including sage-grouse. The com-

pleted project treated 10,000 acres and was funded through multiple sources.

Partners, participants, or contributors: Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Southwest Wyoming Sage-Grouse Working Group, Wyoming State Forestry Division, 39 livestock permittees, four private land owners, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, Jonah Interagency Mitigation and Reclamation Office, Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition

Sweetwater County Weed Control

The Sweetwater County Weed Control Project helps control invasive species in riparian areas to reduce economic and ecological impacts. This project reduces the spread of noxious weeds and other invasive species, thereby limiting the competition for resources and increasing the success of native plant populations.

Weed treatments were applied on 300 acres, including tamarisk and perennial pepperweed

treatment along Little Bitter Creek. Funding for the project helped leverage resources available from Sweetwater County.

Partners, participants, or contributors: Sweetwater County Weed and Pest, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Anadarko Petroleum Corporation

BLM Rock Springs



Tamarisk die-off following treatment.

Estimates show the WLCI area has:

- 100,000 deer
- 100,000 pronghorn
- 8,000 moose
- 1,400 big horn sheep
- 40,000 elk

2007 Milestones

February

Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announces the Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI), which includes the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI).

The WLCI Coordination Team begins to form with representatives from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Regional WLCI open houses are held in Rawlins, Kemmerer, Rock Springs, and Pinedale to introduce the WLCI concept; over 130 people participate.

April

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is signed, which describes the relationship among the BLM, USGS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) and U.S. Forest Service (FS) for WLCI work.

The BLM makes an internal call for on-the-ground projects that can be accomplished by Sept. 2007. Projects totaling \$402,000 are funded that involve county governments, conservation districts, private landholders, grazing permittees, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

May

The USGS sponsors a WLCI Science Workshop at the University of Wyoming, which is attended by 140 individuals representing more than 35 different agencies or groups. The workshop helps in developing WLCI scientific work.

June

The Coordination Team places a call to potential partners and cooperators for

projects in anticipation of Fiscal Year 2008 (FY 08) funding. All project submissions must achieve on-the-ground accomplishments in FY 08.

July

The Support Subcommittee, composed of members from the FWS, WGFD, FS, BLM, National Park Service, Bureau of Reclamation and Natural Resources Conservation Service, meets to initiate and coordinate habitat projects at the field office level. This group works with and solicits projects from the general public, partners, support personnel, and field managers. Additional groups may be asked to join this group.

An interagency group ranks FY 08 project requests totaling \$4.5 million. Final selection depends upon the FY 08 Congressional appropriation to the BLM.

August

An FWS representative joins the Coordination Team.

Regional workshops are held in Kemmerer, Rawlins, and Rock Springs to review WLCI accomplishments, discuss project objectives, solicit projects for FY 09, and request data that can be used for the USGS comprehensive assessment. Over 80 people participate in these workshops.

A communication plan is drafted to enhance outreach efforts and provide information to the public.

The USGS posts the Science Plan/Strategy on the WLCI Web site for public review and comment.

September

A draft Fund Management Agreement with the Wildlife Heritage Foundation of Wyoming that may facilitate use of non-

federal funds for WLCI projects is submitted to the Executive Committee for review.

The Executive Committee holds a public meeting at the BLM Rock Springs Field Office and receives comments.

October

FY 09 projects are submitted to help determine appropriate levels for the BLM appropriation request.

The Executive Committee adds two new members representing the counties and conservation districts of southwest Wyoming. This new membership reflects the importance of local input throughout the process.

November

A WGFD representative for the Coordination Team begins work.

The Coordination Team and Science and Technical Advisory Committee begin developing a plan to integrate science and on-the-ground management. This plan is considered essential to the success of the WLCI, with conservation actions to be driven by science.

December

The Coordination Team begins developing a strategic plan for the WLCI to lay out goals, objectives and strategies. This plan will link together the various documents that have been and will be developed to guide WLCI work.

Congress passes FY 08 funding for the WLCI, which is signed by the President. Federal funding for the initiative is set at \$1.25 million for the BLM, \$1.5 million for the USGS and \$1.5 million for the FWS.

WLCI Organization

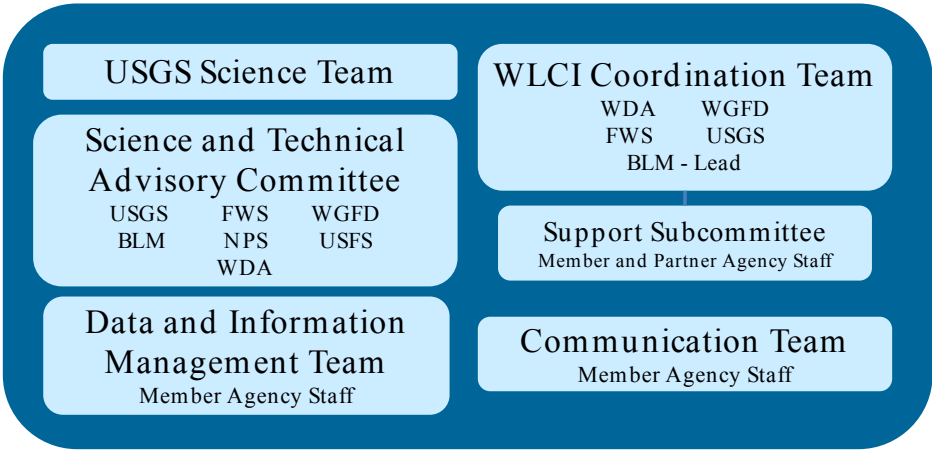
An **Executive Committee** composed of government executives and elected officials provides the guidance and decision-making authority for the WLCI.

An interagency **Coordination Team** is based in Rock Springs and manages the daily operations of the initiative and maintains regular contact with partners at the field level.

The Coordination Team works with the **Support Subcommittee**, which is represented by agencies in the WLCI area, to develop conservation actions and work with local communities, private landowners and others.

The USGS has a **Science Team** that develops and conducts the majority of the science work for the WLCI.

The interagency **Science and Technical Advisory Committee** helps apply science to on-the-ground management and conservation actions.



WLCI organizational structure envisioned as of March 2008.

The **Data and Information Management Team** shares the information gathered and generated through the WLCI and pulls together resources and tools that assist with information man-

agement and data analysis.

The **Communication Team** shares the message about WLCI work and provides outreach for the initiative.

Rancher John Andrikopoulos meets with staff from the BLM Pinedale Field Office and the WLCI Coordination Team to explain his vision for a project that provides swan habitat similar to this existing pond.

FWS



Roles of WLCI Groups

Various agencies and organizations are involved in the WLCI effort. Below is a description of their roles. The first eight groups have signed or plan to sign the WLCI Memorandum of Understanding.

Bureau of Land Management

The BLM administers approximately 8 million of the 15 million acres in the WLCI area. The BLM works with partners to implement on-the-ground actions that will enhance habitats. The BLM also monitors projects to ensure they meet the stated purposes. The agency houses the Coordination Team (CT) and is represented on the Executive Committee (EC), CT, Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), Data and Information Management Team (DIMENT), Communication Team and Support Subcommittee.

U.S. Geological Survey

The USGS provides integrated science and methodology to support the WLCI initiative and advance the scientific knowledge and information for informed decision-making by all WLCI partners. The agency provides research in the WLCI area and monitors at the landscape scale. The USGS leads the science effort with the WLCI Science Team and is involved in the EC, CT, STAC, DIMENT and Communication Team.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The FWS has tools for private landowners to develop conservation measures for wildlife, plants, and habitats on non-federal lands. The FWS also provides assurances to the landowner for engaging in such efforts. On-the-ground work on private lands occurs through the FWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Additionally, the FWS expedites environmental reviews to ensure timely project completion. The FWS is included in the EC, CT, STAC, DIMENT, Communication Team and Support Subcommittee.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

The WGFD manages over 250 wildlife species in the WLCI area. By working with private landowners, partnering agencies and other interested groups, the WGFD conducts planning and implementation to put actions on the ground that will conserve habitat and improve land management. The WGFD also inventories and monitors all wildlife in the WLCI area and provides this information to help direct prioritization of conservation actions. The WGFD is represented on the EC, CT, STAC, DIMENT, Communication Team and Support Subcommittee.

Wyoming Department of Agriculture

The WDA acts as a liaison between the WLCI and the agriculture community for project planning and provides assistance and technical support. The WDA is represented on the EC, CT, STAC and Communication Team.

Southwest Wyoming County Commissions

The Southwest Wyoming County Commissions provide local representation and direction to the WLCI. A county commissioner is included in the EC and participates with the Support Subcommittee.

Southwest Wyoming Conservation Districts

The Southwest Wyoming Conservation Districts provide local representation to the WLCI and help with technical expertise and project development at the ground level. A representative from the area's eight conservation districts sits on the EC and participates with the Support Subcommittee.

USDA Forest Service

The FS administers 2.3 million acres of the 15 million acres in the WLCI area. The FS works with partners to implement on-the-ground actions that enhance habitats and monitors projects to ensure they meet their purpose. The FS is represented on the EC, STAC, Communication Team and Support Subcommittee.

National Park Service

The NPS provides technical assistance to the WLCI effort, including representation on the STAC and Support Subcommittee.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The NRCS provides assistance with project planning and technical support to the initiative. The agency is represented on the Support Subcommittee.

Bureau of Reclamation

The BOR provides assistance with project planning and technical support to the initiative. The agency is represented on the Support Subcommittee.

University of Wyoming

The University of Wyoming is represented on the DIMENT and helps with research in the WLCI area.

Other Supporters

Additional support is being received by agencies and other groups through project planning and technical support. Some of these supporters include the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Jonah Interagency Mitigation and Reclamation Office, Wyoming State Land Board and private landowners.



Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative

Daily management and operation of the WLCI is based out of the BLM Rock Springs Field Office. If you are interested in working with the WLCI or have comments, please contact the office listed below. The feedback form on the WLCI website, located at www.wlci.gov/feedback.htm also allows for submission of comments.

BLM Rock Springs Field Office
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, WY 82901
ATTN: Renee Dana

Phone: (307) 352-0256
Fax: (307) 352-0328
www.wlci.gov

BLM Kemmerer



Use of a terra torch at night on the Red Canyon Prescribed Burn.

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occurring to help limit habitat impacts.

The WLCI began in fall 2006 as a long-term effort in southwest Wyoming to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife habitats while facilitating responsible development. The WLCI is also part of the Secretary of the Interior's Healthy Lands Initiative, which was announced in Feb. 2007, to support cooperative conservation work in western states. The WLCI works to ensure healthy fish and wildlife populations across the large WLCI landscape area, which includes both public and private lands west of the Continental Divide. A "landscape" is a land area composed of a diversity of habitat types, which encompass year-round

fish and wildlife needs, such as winter range, migration corridors, or areas for raising young.

The WLCI is sponsored by a broad coalition of government groups that includes the BLM, USGS, FWS, U.S. Forest Service, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, local county governments, and conservation districts. Several other organizations have been involved with the WLCI and plan to provide support in a regular advisory capacity, including the National Park Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, University of Wyoming, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Wyoming State Land Board, and Jonah Interagency Mitigation and Reclamation Office.

The WLCI area includes all of Wyoming west of the Continental Divide and south of Teton County, including the Great Divide Basin.